United Nations A/59/65/Add.1–E/2004/48/Add.1

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
12 March 2004

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-ninth session
Item 118 of the preliminary list*
Joint Inspection Unit

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 2004
Item 14 (g) of the provisional agenda**
Social and human rights questions: human rights

Report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the management review of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Note by the Secretary-General

Addendum

Summary

The present report contains the comments of the Secretary-General on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in its report (JIU/REP/2003/6) on the management and administration of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Despite having a different view of certain data and factual depictions of office policies, the Office of the High Commissioner, for the most part, welcomes the report of the Joint Inspection Unit and will engage in consultations with the Office of Human Resources Management in determining the best course of action in implementing the recommendations of the Unit.

* A/59/50 and Corr.1.
** E/2004/100.

04-26661 (E) 230304

Introduction

1. At its fifty-eighth session, the Commission on Human Rights adopted resolution 2002/80 of 25 April 2002 on the composition of the staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). In paragraph 17 of that resolution, it requested the Joint Inspection Unit:

> "to undertake a comprehensive review of the management and administration of the Office of the High Commissioner, in particular, with regard to its impact on the recruitment policies and the composition of the staff, and to submit a report thereon to the Commission at its sixtieth session containing concrete proposals for the implementation of this resolution".

Subsequently, the Economic and Social Council adopted decision 2002/272 of 25 July 2002, taking note of the resolution and endorsing the decision of the Commission.

2. It may be noted, as a point of departure, that the General Assembly, in part IX, paragraph 4, of its resolution 53/221 of 7 April 1999, requested the Secretary-General, "when submitting future reports on the composition of the Secretariat, to discontinue the established practice of showing the representation of staff according to major geographical groupings ... and to list countries in alphabetical order".

Recommendation 1 (a): The new High Commissioner should reconsider the request to create a post of Chief of Staff to perform the functions detailed in the proposed programme budget document, so as to ensure streamlined management and avoid duplication of functions by the senior management of the Office, which should be exercised by the High Commissioner and his Deputy.

3. In the context of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 the Secretary-General proposed that a post of Chief of Staff (D-2) be created at OHCHR (see A/58/6 (sect. 24), para. 24.8 (a) (i)) in order to oversee policy development, strategic planning, prioritization of needs and activities as well as overall programme implementation. The proposal for that D-2 post was based upon a recommendation of the Office of Internal Oversight Services in its 2002 management review of OHCHR (A/57/488), which recalled an earlier management review that had also recommended the establishment of the position of Office Manager.

4. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, while commenting on the process that led to the establishment of the temporary position, recommended (A/58/7/Add.12) that consideration of the establishment of the post be postponed to give the new High Commissioner the opportunity to review the matter, and indicated that, in the meantime, the current funding arrangement (extrabudgetary) should be maintained, pending the review of the staffing requirements of OHCHR by the new High Commissioner (see A/58/7/Add.12, para. 9). The above-mentioned information has been brought to the attention of the new High Commissioner and will be considered by her upon her assumption of duties towards the end of June 2004.

Recommendation 1 (b): The new High Commissioner should review the grading of the chiefs of branch with a view to ensuring optimal leadership and consistency of structures, presenting budgetary recommendations, as appropriate.

5. OHCHR agrees with this recommendation and has begun implementation in the context of the 2004-2005 budget.

Recommendation 2: The Organigram of the proposed Capacity-building and Field Operations Branch should be revised by integrating the National Institutions Team within the various geographical teams in order to provide comprehensive support within each geographical area while assuring the availability of expert advice, as requested.

6. The National Institutions Team works closely with the geographic teams. It functions in a substantive advisory role relative to other parts of OHCHR. The growth in numbers of national institutions in the world and the importance of national institutions for protection and promotion of human rights at the national level argue for a dedicated national institutions team. The development of national protection systems has been identified by the Secretary-General as a key priority.

Recommendation 3:

(a) Field operations conducted exclusively by OHCHR should be limited to a minimum and to those cases where it has been proven that no alternative exists. The implementation of field operations should be channelled through operational partners whenever possible;

(b) The Office might consider drawing an action plan detailing measures to develop cooperation with different partners such as non-governmental organizations, specialized agencies and United Nations programmes.

7. The Office accepts the recommendation in principle, keeping in mind the implementation of Action Point 2 of the Secretary-General's programme for strengthening the Organization.

Recommendation 4: The Administrative Section should establish a system to account for the assets of field representations and develop a field administrative procedures manual.

8. The recommendation is welcome and implementation is ongoing.

Recommendation 5: The Office should develop a clear information technology strategy, taking the strategic plan developed by the Secretariat of the United Nations as a starting point to build upon, with a view to avoiding duplication of effort and waste of resources. The development of the Core Management System is duplicative of IMIS and should not be pursued.

9. The first part of the recommendation which relates to the development of a clear information strategy corresponds to policy that is already being implemented. As regards the Core Management System, OHCHR is committed to not developing parallel systems which are duplicative of IMIS. The Office has therefore initiated, jointly with the Information and Communication Technology Service of the United Nations Office at Geneva, a review aimed at ensuring that the respective features of

IMIS and the OHCHR Core Management System are complementary and mutually reinforcing. The recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit have proven helpful in giving new impetus to collaboration between OHCHR and the United Nations Office at Geneva in this matter.

Recommendation 6: The Office should review the mandate of the Advisory Panel on Personnel Issues with a view to ensuring that it contributes towards the improvement of the geographical composition of the staff of the Office in general. The composition of the Panel itself should be reviewed so as to reflect a more balanced geographical distribution of its membership.

10. The Advisory Panel on Personnel Issues (APPI) was established primarily to: (a) review proposals from OHCHR programme managers for the recruitment of project personnel under technical cooperation projects not subject to the stringency of United Nations regulations and rules with regard to recruitment and promotion as well as other field staff; and (b) formulate recommendations thereon to the High Commissioner through the Office's Management Board. The Office has therefore gone beyond normal administrative requirements to ensure a fair and transparent staff selection mechanism for field personnel. APPI applies, mutatis mutandis, the requirements and procedures of vacancies processed through the Galaxy system. As OHCHR moves towards a more generalized use of the 100 Series of the Staff Rules, the role and scope of APPI will be gradually reduced.

Recommendation 7: The Office should compile annually a list of those countries which are either unrepresented or underrepresented within the Office, and the Secretariat should take that list into consideration when organizing specialized competitive human rights examinations.

11. This recommendation will be further studied together with the Office of Human Resources Management.

Recommendation 8: The imbalance in the geographical distribution of the staff of the Office is an issue that can only be solved through a determined management action. Thus, the High Commissioner should prepare an action plan aimed at reducing the current imbalance and indicating specific targets and deadlines to be achieved.

12. The Office is working, jointly with the Office of Human Resources Management, towards the implementation of a management action plan to ensure greater geographical balance within OHCHR.

Recommendation 9: The Office might offer a transition period, not longer than one year, during which contracts of staff currently under the 200 series of the Staff Rules and performing core functions would be regularized into 100-series contracts "limited to service with OHCHR". Thereafter, the Office should align its recruitment and contractual policies with those of the Secretariat.

13. This recommendation is under review in conjunction with the Office of Human Resources Management. It may be noted that General Assembly resolutions mandate that recruitment at the P-2 level be done through competitive examinations and that the prospects for promotion to the P-3 level of staff recruited through competitive examinations need to be protected.

Recommendation 10: The Office should check and align its post-classification criteria with those of the Secretariat before any post is advertised, and should discontinue the practice of advertising extrabudgetary posts without first checking the classification criteria with the United Nations Office at Geneva.

14. This recommendation is already being implemented by the Office.